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Climate traitor Trudeau

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Body

Another day, another disappointment for Bill McKibben. The eco-activist, author and co-founder of the anti-carbon lobby group 350.org, confessed Monday that he's been let down yet again, this time by our own prime minister, Justin Trudeau. Worse, McKibben wrote in the U.K.'s Guardian, Trudeau has proven himself to be phonier than even Donald Trump. The Liberals must be mortified.

McKibben's been left disillusioned before by politicians who claim they're climate leaders but then fail to commit to the full-blown economic Seppuku that would be required to "decarbonize," by shutting down oil and gas exploration and production. At least Trump admits he doesn't buy into the carbon-climate panic, McKibben notes. And he long ago pegged Stephen Harper's government as a "wholly owned subsidiary of the fossil fuel industry."

But Trudeau's pulled a "scam," McKibben grouses. He's "cute," and a master at the "politics of inclusion" with his compassion for immigrants and his flamboyant male feminism, but such matters mean so little compared to "the defining issue of our day" - climate change. And on that file, he insists, Trudeau is as big a heel as they come.

Trudeau is "hard at work pushing for new pipelines through Canada and the US to carry yet more oil out of Alberta's tar sands, which is one of the greatest climate disasters on the planet," McKibben gripes. The prime minister, he notes, told an international oil conference last month that "No country would find 173-billion barrels of oil in the ground and just leave them there," but that's exactly what McKibben expects us to do.

McKibben considers it arrogant for Canada, "which represents one half of 1 per cent of the planet's population" to claim the "right to sell the oil that will use up a third of the earth's remaining carbon budget" (meaning, if the Alberta oil sands is fully exploited, it will output 30 per cent of the carbon-dioxide emissions it would take to push us past the 1.5-degree climate-warming target Trudeau agreed to in Paris). If Canada wants to help, McKibben explains, it must refuse to sell any more oil.

Cut off our supply and let the world learn to start doing without it. All our carbon taxes, coal bans, climate rules and billions in green subsidies count for bupkis, McKibben says, as long as "Canada is busy shipping carbon all over the world."

McKibben doesn't mention that, without a near doubling of Canada's current production levels, it would take more than a century to produce those 173-billion barrels Trudeau spoke of. Or that Canadian oil makes up just four per cent of the world's oil inventory, so cutting our supply would make little difference to the world's consumption.

But McKibben does have a point in exposing the futility of Canada's insignificant attempts at controlling the climate while the rest of the planet incinerates more fossil fuels than at any time in human history. Defenders of Canadian carbon-tax regimes were left spluttering Monday that McKibben could give our progressive leaders so little credit for

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charging people more in carbon taxes to drive and heat their homes. Trudeau's adviser, Gerald Butts, said on Twitter that McKibben's dogmatism, opposing any further fossil fuel production, "feels good but solves little." The practical solution to global warming, Butts said, was carbon taxes. He was backed up by the University of Alberta's Andrew Leach, who helped craft that province's carbon-tax regime. Leach pointed out that McKibben once argued in favour of carbon taxes, too: They would "enlist markets in the fight against global warming," the activist wrote in Rolling Stone in 2012.

But that was a whole five years ago and, as the Trudeau Liberals and Alberta's NDP are discovering, ***climate justice*** warriors like McKibben aren't stopping at yesterday's non-extreme measures like carbon taxes. That was just to warm-up the audience to their anti-oil narrative, before demanding a full shutdown of the fossil-fuel economy. McKibben supported Barack Obama when the former president unleashed his regulatory war on coal plants and ratcheted up vehicle emission standards. But when his White House granted Shell a licence to drill for oil in the Arctic, McKibben accused Obama of "climate denial." He considers Australia's Malcolm Turnbull as duplicitous as Trudeau because he called for "global action" on climate as he signed the Paris accord, but his government backs a massive new coalmine in Queensland. If progressive politicians were serious about keeping the climate from warming, McKibben proclaimed, after turning on Obama, "we have to leave most carbon underground." No more fracking or drilling in the U.S. No more coalmines in Australia. No more oil sands oil from Alberta. Full stop.

Policy-makers in Canada who assumed the costly Danegeld of coal bans and escalating carbon taxes would buy them climate credibility seem stunned that the environmentalist movement now attacks them as worse than even planet-haters like Trump and Harper. Alberta's Rachel Notley had tried bringing radical environmentalists Tzeporah Berman and Karen Mahon, of ForestEthics, onto her side by giving them roles in setting her carbon-capping energy policy. Both now fight her province from the inside, still agitating against Alberta's oil industry. "Decarbonization means managed decline," Berman preached in November, after Trudeau's approval of the expansion of an Alberta to B.C. pipeline. Mahon is currently promoting a nationwide campaign to take "direct action" to block pipeline construction.

Trudeau and Notley will console themselves that most voters will dismiss McKibben, Berman and Mahon as too extreme, anyway. But at least the radicals have consistency on their side. It's getting harder for Canada's so-called climate leaders to explain why they're anti-carbon, but not entirely anti-carbon. Why the oil sands must be "phased out," as Trudeau maintains, but "not tomorrow." Why Canadians must suffer taxes and pricey green power when - as Leach pointed out Monday in refuting McKibben - Canadian emissions are a "rounding error" in the global system. Why, like Augustine, Canadians must be carbon chaste - but not yet. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

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